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providing the number of credits associated with said voucher for use by said player at said gaming machine in placing a wager entitling said player to play a game at said gaming machine if said voucher is verified.

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22. The method in accordance with Claim 21 including the step of awarding said voucher to a player independent of said player paying value.

23. The method in accordance with Claim 21 including the step of accepting one or more of said credits as said wager at said gaming machine.

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action mailed October 02, 2002. Claims 1-20 remain pending after this Response.

By this Response, Applicants have amended the Abstract so that the Abstract does not exceed 150 words in length.

By the Office Action, the Examiner indicated the rejection of Claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Clapper, Jr. Applicants assert that Claims 1-20 are allowable over the prior art, including Clapper Jr., for the following reasons.

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General Discussion Regarding Differences Between Invention and Clapper, Jr.

The present invention relates to a gaming system which includes a plurality of individual gaming machines. As is known, a player must provide credit, such as a monetary bet or wager, in order to be entitled to play a gaming machine and be entitled to a win. In accordance with the invention, vouchers are issued which may be redeemed or accepted at the gaming machines in order to provide the necessary credit for game play. The voucher may represent paid up credits or promotional or "free" credits. In accordance with the invention, information necessary to create the voucher is generated and the voucher is then printed at a location or device remote or apart from the gaming machine at which it is presented. A data record regarding the voucher is also created and is stored. In this manner, when the voucher is later presented for use, such as redeemed at a particular gaming machine, the authenticity of the voucher and its value can be determined by using the stored data record regarding that voucher.

Clapper, Jr. teaches a voucher issuing device. The device issues vouchers from a roll or strip 30 (Col. 10, lines 9-12). The roll or strip is pre-printed with voucher indicia 52, such as phone card information (Col. 10, lines 45-55). The roll or strip also bears second or "game" indicia 50 (Col. 10, lines 56-60).

The premise behind Clapper, Jr.'s invention is to entice consumers to buy a voucher, such as a phone card. To entice the consumer, Clapper, Jr. discloses associating game indicia with the voucher. Those game indicia are used to play a promotion (Col. 2, lines 12-16). Clapper, Jr. discloses that when the voucher is issued, the player may examine the game indicia to determine if they are winner of the promotion (Col. 6, lines 16-20). In addition, Clapper, Jr. discloses that the

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result of the promotion may be displayed to the player by the voucher issuing device. As such, the game indicia includes a bar code 60 which is representative of the game indicia (Col. 12, lines 4-6). The voucher issuing device includes a scanner 68 which reads the bar code 60 and introduces the code to a microprocessor 120 (Col. 14, lines 58-59). In one embodiment, the bar code is read at the same time the voucher is issued by the device, and in another, the bar code is read when the player re-inserts the voucher into a slot (Col. 15, lines 33-35 and Col. 16, lines 18-25). The microprocessor operates an indicia control means which cause the display of indicia on a display 132 (Col. 15, lines 41-45). In this manner, the voucher issuing device also displays the outcome of the promotion which is also printed on the voucher itself.

Several fundamental differences between the present invention and Clapper, Jr. will now be appreciated. First, Clapper, Jr. does not disclose both printing a voucher and creating and storing a record of information regarding that voucher for later use in authenticating/accepting the voucher. Instead, in Clapper, Jr., a pre-printed voucher includes a bar code. Information which is read from the bar code is used to display the outcome of the promotion. The bar code information is not verified against a data record in order to establish entitlement to utilize the voucher in the promotion. Further, the indicia printed on the voucher of Clapper, Jr. does not represent value or credits which may be used to play a game at a gaming machine. Instead, the indicia comprises a promotion or the result of the promotion itself. As also noted, Clapper, Jr. also does not disclose printing the vouchers, but only issuing vouchers from a roll of vouchers.

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Independent Claim 1

Independent Claim 1 recites, among other things, a method including the step of generating a data record regarding a voucher, the record for later use in accepting the voucher, the record including information regarding value which is usable at a gaming machine to establish entitlement to play a game. As indicated, Clapper, Jr. does not create a data record regarding a voucher and does not disclose vouchers having associated value which may be used to establish entitlement to play a game at a gaming machine.

Independent Claim 9

Independent Claim 9 recites a voucher generation and accounting system which includes at least one gaming machine configured to present a game based upon a bet in the form of credits received from a player, a host and a voucher issuance device adapted to generate data regarding a voucher representing credit for use by a player at a gaming machine, print the voucher, and create a record regarding the voucher including the credit represented by the voucher, the at least one voucher issuance device in communication with the host for providing voucher information for use by the host in verifying a voucher presented to the gaming machine.

Applicants assert that Clapper, Jr. does not disclose a system where vouchers represent credit which may be used as a wager to play a game at a gaming machine, and configured so that when the voucher is presented to a gaming device, voucher information in the form of a record is utilized by a host to verify the voucher for use at the gaming machine. As indicated, in Clapper, Jr. a record regarding the voucher is not created separate from the voucher, and the voucher does not represent

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credits which may be used at a gaming machine to play a game. Instead, the voucher in Clapper, Jr. at most includes a bar code or similar data representing the outcome of a promotion.

Independent Claim 13

Independent Claim 13 is believed to be allowable over the prior art, including Clapper, Jr., for reasons similar to those of Claim 9. In particular, Claim 13 recites a method in which a voucher presented to a gaming machine is verified so that associated credit value may be used to play a game.

New Independent Claim 21

New independent Claim 21 recites a method in which voucher data, including a number of credits usable at a gaming machine, is generated. When the voucher is presented at a gaming machine, the voucher is verified and then the number of credits associated with the voucher are provided for use by the player in placing a wager to play a game at a gaming machine.

Once again, Clapper, Jr. does not teach or suggest a storing data regarding a voucher, the information including credit value. In Clapper, Jr. voucher information is not stored, but instead promotional results are simply printed on a voucher. Further, in Clapper, Jr., a voucher is not verified when presented to a gaming machine, nor are credits associated with the voucher provided for use in placing a wager at the gaming machine.

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Dependent Claims 2-8, 10-12, 14-20 and 22-23

Applicants assert that Claims 2-8, 10-12, 14-20 and 22-23 are allowable for at least the reason that they depend from an allowable independent claim.

Summary

Applicants assert that Claims 1-23 are in a condition for allowance and respectfully request a notice as to the same. If any matters remain outstanding, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: January 2, 2003 By:


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